ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME 6/19/65	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED001742	N.A.	OE-20062

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S): Franseth, Jane, and others

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Grouping Children for Instruction in the Elementary School: A Conference Points the Way

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: School Life

7. EDITOR(S): N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN ORG. Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare ST. Washington, CITY, STATE D.C.

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

TELE. EXT. INST/LOC CODE

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	1963	14

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR conference

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

group learning	group values	teaching methods	
group instruction	group research	elementary education	
classroom organization	elementary teaching	grouping	
		teaching practices	

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

There are significant factors in grouping elementary school children for effective learning. The Elementary Schools Section has examined numerous research studies on grouping. Discussed are questions concerned with relative values of grouping children according to need, special abilities, and achievement levels.

Predictions on the future of grouping situations and organizational structures are described.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION

20. DIVISION OR DEPT.

21. CONTRACT NO.

PROJECT NO.

22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT

23. DURATION OF PROJECT

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

371.3

OE-20062

ED001742

Grouping Children for Instruction in the Elementary School:

A Conference Points the Way

Reprinted from *School Life*
June, July, December 1963

Educational Materials Laboratory
Office of Education
JUL 1964
DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Superintendent of Documents Catalog No. FS 5.220:20062

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1964

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C., 20402 - Price 15 cents

371.3

Grouping children for instruction—a conference points the way

Last spring the Elementary Schools Section of the Office of Education conducted a 2-day conference on research in the grouping of children for instruction. In her introductory remarks, Helen K. Mackintosh, Chief of the Elementary Schools Section, said that the major purpose of the conference was to get the assistance of the participants in examining research evidence and in identifying the significant factors in grouping elementary school children effectively for learning. Some time before the conference, the Office had invited nine specialists in the field to examine a preliminary draft of the report, Grouping Children in the Elementary School: Research and Implications, *prepared by members of the Elementary Schools Section, and to present statements on the subject at the conference. At one of the opening sessions Jane Franseth, Office specialist in rural education and director of the project, talked about the reasons for the study and briefly summarized some of the findings of the Office study. Abstracts of talks by Dr. Franseth and by guest consultants are presented in this reprint of articles from the June, July and December, 1963 issues of* School Life.

Research in grouping: A review

JANE FRANSETH

FOR MORE than a hundred years teachers and administrators have been struggling with problems of organizing the elementary school. Although many studies have been conducted for the purpose of determining the relative effectiveness of different ways of grouping children on the basis of pupil achievement, the findings have been inconclusive. Consequently, teachers, principals, and supervisors are still searching for sound answers to their questions. Many of them and some parents, too, write to the Office of Education for information about grouping children in the elementary school.

The questions vary considerably, but these are perhaps typical: What are the relative merits of ability versus homogeneous grouping? Do children grouped according to ability learn more or less than children grouped heterogeneously? What do research findings tell us about the relative effectiveness of ability versus heterogeneous grouping?

In an effort to find dependable answers to these and other questions, the Elementary Schools Section has examined numerous research studies on grouping. In our review of studies we have searched particularly for answers to such questions as these:

Do some grouping procedures make more difference than others in helping pupils learn to read or spell or write? In helping pupils acquire skills in critical thinking? In developing creativity? Or in developing the intellectual ability to evaluate evidence as a basis for making sound judgments?

What are the relative values of grouping children according to need, interest, friendship, special abilities, special difficulties, or achievement levels? Does flexibility in grouping practices affect the kind, amount, or quality of what a pupil learns in his class?

To what extent do ways of grouping children make a difference in helping them become responsible, capable, thoughtful, creative persons, increasingly able to live in accord with democratic values?

Do ways of grouping make a difference in helping each child reach his full potential for a creative and useful life?

Needless to say, the research available does not answer all of these questions. Some may not be answerable by way of research, since the answers depend on the beliefs and values a school and its patrons hold. Other questions are particularly hard to answer, for the answers would require knowledge and understanding of many interrelated factors in the educative process. For example, in the Elementary Section, we sometimes find it hard to offer useful suggestions in response to inquiries that give little or no information about the school program or about the purposes the school is attempting to accomplish. For a case in point, take the question, Do children grouped according to ability learn more or less than children grouped heterogeneously? Before responding to this question we would need to ask, "Learn more of what? for what purpose?" Any school practices, educators generally assume, should be determined in the light of what the school wants children to learn. If this assumption is justified, then the choice of particular grouping methods should be determined in the light of the purposes to be accomplished.

This is not to say, however, that the research reports we examined do not answer any of our questions. Certainly they do, but the answers are limited, for much of the research evidence currently available is limited largely

to the effects of grouping procedures on pupils' academic achievement—in reading, for example—as measured by standardized tests. Few studies have been conducted to determine possible effects of different organizational methods on pupils' growth in ability to think, on the development of such values as respect for the worth of the individual, on the development of creativity, or on the development of adequate perceptions of self.

Unfortunately few studies on grouping report anything about the role of the teachers, what they did, how they worked with the children, or about the interaction of teachers and pupils. Furthermore, the studies examined report very little about the teachers as persons. It may well be, for example, that differences in pupils' gains in achievement sometimes attributed to the particular grouping procedures used may be the result of what happens between the teacher and the children after groups are formed.

As Dr. Mackintosh has said, we hope in this conference to increase our knowledge and deepen our understanding of the many factors in grouping pupils for learning. Perhaps, too, the conference will stimulate research that will help us identify the effects of different grouping procedures on children's gains in learning—including grouping on such bases as friendship, interest, committee work, and others that serve different purposes and changing needs. We hope also that the conference will help us find answers to questions about the relation between certain qualities of the teacher and the gains his pupils make.

A brief summary of the findings and conclusions from our reviews of studies available follows.

★ Research on the relative merits of different organizational procedures as they affect pupils' achievement in the elementary school is extensive, but the results are, as we have said, inconclusive and indefinite.

★ Many studies made since the turn of the century and before compare achievement gains of pupils grouped according to ability (mental maturity, IQ, attainment level) with gains made by their counterparts in heterogeneously grouped classrooms. The findings seem to follow no definite pattern. Available evidence indicates that factors other than the particular grouping methods used account for any differences that may show up in achievement tests between children grouped according to ability and those grouped heterogeneously.

★ We reviewed studies of pupils grouped according to several ways of identifying ability—mental maturity ratings, levels of achievement especially in reading, teachers' judgments—and by a combination of types. And we reviewed as many types of heterogeneous grouping: one grade to a classroom—made up of pupils representing the normal range of abilities; the multiple-graded classroom, the nongraded classroom or continuous progress organization, and some classrooms in which an effort had been made to widen the range of individual differences in maturity, achievement, and age. Some studies show gains in favor of ability grouping and some in favor of heterogeneous grouping. Others show little or no statistically significant differences among grouping methods in pupil achievement as measured by standardized tests.

★ One fact revealed in our studies may be of special interest. It is that, on the average, achievement gains made by pupils in classrooms representing *more than the usual range of differences* among pupils were higher than the average gains made by pupils in ability-grouped classrooms. However, the number of such situations (wider than usual range of abilities in a classroom) examined is too limited for a conclusive statement on this point.

★ Research shows that human variability and a wide range of individual differences constitute normal phenomena. When teachers and administrators understand and accept this fact, some authorities maintain, they recognize individual differences as a precious asset, that differences among children help to enrich resources for learning in the classroom. There is reason to believe that, consciously or unconsciously, children help to improve each other's opportunities for learning.

★ Among the serious handicaps to full development of a child's potential, according to some authorities, is the single-grade standard, which in some classrooms tends to keep a child from making full use of resources available and to limit the extent to which he has a chance to make full use of his potential.

★ Many studies on grouping deal with the effects on academic achievement as measured by standardized tests, but only a few have attempted to examine the effects of grouping procedures on children's attitudes, self-concepts, and other factors in their development. Although the number of such studies is too limited for more than a tentative conclusion, there is reason to believe that, for some children at least, the practice of ability grouping does produce undesirable effects.

★ Little research has been conducted to determine the possible effects of different ways of grouping on children's growth in such areas as ability to think, on the development of creativity, or on the development of human values—respect for the worth of the individual, human dignity, and the like.

★ Among the most enlightening results of our examination of the research was our reinforced and increased understanding of the difficulties in attempting to divide children according to ability.

These, then, are the major conclusions of our preliminary study, but they are not the end of our search for sound and practical answers to our questions.

Learning in groups: Some considerations

ALEXANDER FRAZIER

TO MOST OF US, continuous attention given to how best to group children is warranted because we see the group as much more than a center of instruction. How groups are composed, how they are staffed, how their time is scheduled, and how they are expected to operate—we see all these as more than simply details for the school administrator to work out. But what do we think really matters in grouping pupils? Let us look at some points currently being considered.

What groups are good for

> Community . . . is the being no longer side by side but *with* one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it also moves toward one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the other, a flowing from *I* to *Thou*. Community is where community happens.—Martin Buber, "Dialogue," in *Between Man and Man*.

A group of pupils is potentially much more than simply a roomful of children for instruction, though it is that, too. A group can be many things:

1. A resource for learning, which provides an opportunity for its members to learn from one another—new information, new values, and new ways of behaving.
2. A testing ground where pupils learn about all kinds of subjects, including themselves.
3. A creator of "common learnings" (the general knowledge and skills that all citizens need) through interaction, consensus, and continuous extension of ideas and deepening of insight and understanding.
4. A context for learning, which depends upon relationships continuing in time so that pupils may learn to plan together, to lead others, and to work toward common ends.
5. A kind of culture, a community rather than merely a "collectivity," which Buber defines as "not a binding but a bundling together."

New ideas that affect our thinking about groups

> With team teaching, Billy can look forward to new acquaintances in each room.—Arthur D. Morse, *Schools of Tomorrow—Today!*

Behind many of the current proposals for better ways of grouping pupils and scheduling their time for learning are new fears, new convictions, and new ideas that we need to understand. In the proposals themselves these ideas may sometimes be hard to see because we cannot accept the immediate purposes they present or the context in which the proposals appear. I refer to such fears and ideas as these:

1. The fear that the individual may get lost in the multitude, that emphasis on the same information and skills for all may lead to conformity.
2. The fear that emphasis on group instruction may have crowded out opportunities for independent study and research that pupils need if they are to become self-directing and to develop their talents.
3. A new sense of urgency for making sure that some pupils are not held back by slower pupils.
4. A belief that a single teacher is incapable of dealing with all a pupil's needs for knowledge and that, with less to teach, a teacher could become more highly specialized and thus more useful; that with multiple teachers, even for a single course or class, a pupil would learn more.
5. A new conviction that some needs of elementary school pupils are not met when they are grouped with pupils their own age, that they need to be in groups with other pupils, possibly both younger and older.
6. A contention that the size of the group has little or no effect on pupils' learning.
7. A contention that less time than we have thought necessary should be provided for pupils to have experiences in small groups, that only enough time for essential interaction is necessary, and that more time should be provided for some study in large groups—in getting information, for example—and for study outside the group.
8. A contention that better ways of teaching than by oral instruction can be found, that the drudgery can be removed from teaching, and that the teacher can become counselor and stimulator of learning.
9. A contention that master teachers (there are not now and perhaps never will be many), using such devices as large classes and television, can greatly improve instruction.

Doubts to be expressed

> "No," said the priest, "it is not necessary to accept everything as true, one must only accept it as necessary."

DR. FRAZIER *is director, Center for School Experimentation, The Ohio State University.*

> "A melancholy conclusion," said K. "It turns lying into a universal principle."—Franz Kafka, *The Trial.*

As professional educators, we view many of the proposals for different ways of grouping and scheduling as uninformed, if not injurious. We suspect both the breadth of the background in education and the motives of some of the sponsors. We should bring our doubts out into the open and look at them directly. We may, for example, think that some sponsors of these ideas are interested in only some kinds of learning, only in the bright pupils and master teachers; that they are contemptuous of most teachers and slow and needy pupils; that they do not understand the great variety of individual differences, and the facts that the teacher must continuously try to provide for differences, that children learn from one another, that there is value in pupils learning social customs and standards of behavior, and that both individual and the group can learn in a group setting. We may think that other sponsors merely desire to save money or to accommodate to rising enrollments and the threat of a teacher shortage, or that they are preoccupied with gadgetry and materials and have no well-developed conception of learning as discovery and the place of materials in such a conception. Some of us may think that sponsors are more interested in indoctrinating than in educating pupils.

Convictions to be retested

> "Courage does not need the safety of an unquestionable conviction. It includes the risk without which no creative life is possible."—Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith.*

It must now be clear to all of us that our beliefs about what groups are good for have been challenged on almost every count. And it must be just as clear that we need to state as well as we can the values we see in group experience so that we can not only identify the essentials to be held to but also ask whether there are new ways to realize these values. Let us look at and retest our own convictions, among them these:

1. Pupils of most ages need knowledge of social behavior and customs which they can acquire only by interaction with others of the same age.

2. Many kinds of learning are possible only in a group in which members have time enough together to get to know each other well.

3. A teacher has to be with the same group of pupils for a considerable length of time in order to find out the needs of the individuals in it and to plan for them to have opportunities for suitable experiences.

4. Enduring relationships between a teacher and a member of a group of pupils and among the pupils themselves are basic to their successful learning; if such relationships are to develop, the group and the teacher must spend most of each day together.

5. Pupils learn to live democratically, to create a sense of community, and to acquire the many skills they need only in the daily give and take of their home group, and such experience is worth the teacher's continuous attention.

6. Almost all the kinds of learning we most value in school cannot take place unless pupils and teacher have opportunity for continuous interaction.

Issues to be explored

> "Some time ago a woman, believing me to be in sympathy with all scientific innovations concerning the school, showed me with evident satisfaction a corset or brace for pupils. She had invented this and felt that it would complete the work of the bench. . . . All this is the logical consequence of a material application of the methods of science to the decadent school. Evidently the rational method of combating spinal curvature in the pupils is to change the form of their work—so that they shall no longer be obliged to remain for so many hours a day in a harmful position. It is a conquest of liberty which the school needs, not the mechanism of a bench."—Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method.*

With all our feelings out in the open, we may need to take the new ideas seriously and put our convictions earnestly to the test. The rash of lay or semiprofessional proposals may be attempts to answer the wrong questions, but they could also be symptoms of something wrong; they could also mean that something remains to be done in addition to what we ourselves recognize.

Can we identify some issues that interest us and that we feel we can afford to explore professionally? Let me suggest a few for a start:

1. Are we bringing pupils enough richness from adults in our communities? Could we find ways to provide for more professional assistants in elementary schools? Science consultants, for example?

2. Are we doing all we can to help children gain the knowledge that can come from their association with children of different ages? What knowledge comes from such association and how much do we value it? Can we organize pupils of different ages into classes that would be in keeping with our convictions?

3. Do we need to think through again possible uses of teaching large groups? Are there values that a pupil can gain from experiences as part of an audience that we are not now recognizing in our programs? Can a mass medium be used in large groups on its own terms; that is, can it be used as a medium carrying messages which are valuable in themselves rather than as instruction or aids to instruction?

4. Are we offering pupils maximum opportunity to learn through interaction in most of our classrooms? Do our pupils get the values we think they do from small groups and enduring relationships? Could we do better?

5. Do we need to reexamine provisions for independent learning in our programs? Do we plan to create new programs with room for different interests and abilities? Do we use school time wisely in independent studies? Do all children have time to study independently?

6. Could we think more deeply about the problem of simultaneously insuring group learning and fostering individual creativity? Can we be more inventive by varying our routes? Do we waste time in letting pupils learn too little too well? Do we value pupils' differences and try to develop them?

7. What is the minimal time a child needs with one teacher to acquire a feeling of security? Could we try out new combinations of pupils without endangering the home base?

8. Has our concern for meeting group standards of achievement impeded pupils' progress? Have grade standards and too-tight confinement to study materials interfered with pupils' learning? Can we loosen up the situation within grades as an alternative to cross-grade achievement grouping?

9. Is it possible that we could learn to do a better job of instruction if we depended less on oral teaching? Do we waste time in trying to provide too much group instruction? Could we use some closely programed materials on our own terms or develop some of our own?

10. If we tried, could we ourselves become more inventive in proposing and testing better bases for setting up group and individual relationships that might meet newly recognized needs on a truly professional basis? What might such better bases be?

GROUPING

A preliminary statement

HAROLD DRUMMOND

MOST U.S. CITIZENS, probably including most educators, seem to be looking for and eager to adopt panaceas in education. Few persons in the profession or out seem willing to face the hard facts of life and one fact in particular: *What happens to groups after they are formed is of greater significance than who is excluded from or included in the group.* We as a people seem to be willing just now to spend millions of dollars on developing television so that the influence of the master teacher can be spread widely; developing programed materials which can be used at school and at home; trying new organizational schemes with tracks, teams, and groups. But yet we are unwilling to spend equal amounts to reduce the size of classes to about 20 pupils per teacher, to make true individualization of instruction possible.

The hard facts of life are that we have never really tried—on a large scale—to provide a spacious classroom, a well-educated teacher, a rich base of learning materials and supplies, and good consultant services for every 20 youngsters. Yet almost every time we have tried to provide an organizational scheme superior to the grouping of pupils of different ages (as in a 2-room school), we have stubbed our toes badly.

It may be that—

—the research which has been done is faulty;

—we haven't yet developed, but will in time develop, better ways of separating pupils into teachable groups;

—new techniques of instruction being developed by team teachers, television teachers, and audiovisual experts may in time make instruction of large groups effective;

—programed courses will provide for better sequential learning experiences for a majority of pupils;

—organizational structures which provide for both vertical and horizontal grouping may have sufficient flexibility to provide a wholesome intellectual climate for every pupil;

—the dreams sketched in *Images of the Future* (J. Lloyd Trump) may turn out to be realities, not nightmares;

—the work of the teacher will change markedly—

But I doubt it.

On the basis of the research summarized for this meeting, I would confidently predict that the future will in many ways be more like the past than the present. I would also predict that we will soon develop and test with elaborate research designs a theory of learning and teach-

DR. DRUMMOND *is chairman of the Department of Elementary Education, University of New Mexico.*

ing which is eclectic and which will result in some of the following conditions:

Twenty to twenty-five pupils per classroom.

Classes deliberately planned to include pupils of different ages (6-, 7-, 8-year-olds) and varying widely in ability.

One teacher responsible for doing most of the teaching and planning of one class, but able and willing to frequently draw on special personnel for help.

Groups which cut across age groups doing considerable work together with fair effectiveness.

Television, programed materials, audiovisual aids, and carefully written textbooks used fairly extensively by subgroups within the classroom while the teacher works with other subgroups.

More consideration for personal feelings and perceptions between principal and teacher, principal and pupil, and teacher and pupil. More recognition that how one feels about himself is important.

More attention to setting goals and raising aspirations as an essential to motivation, and to success as an essential to evaluation.

Other predictions I would make optimistically:

That before long, research—supported by the Office of Education and other governmental agencies such as the National Institute of Mental Health, national and State education associations, and professional research groups—will try to determine what happens to youngsters attending schools with different organizational structures.

That many more answers will be sought which will throw light on the pupil's perception of himself and how it is affected, if at all, by different organizational structures and grouping plans.

That more experimentation will be directed at determining the optimum conditions for pupils of different ages to learn effectively in a nongraded self-contained classroom. We may find that the schoolday is too long or that it is too short; that many materials are needed or that few are needed; that teachers need to be human relations experts or that they need to be kind, benevolent souls but hard taskmasters; that teachers are not needed.

Let the chips fall where they may. Many studies undertaken 20 years ago need to be repeated with the more sophisticated research designs now possible and with today's children. Obviously our knowledge about optimum learning conditions is sparse and the evidence is contradictory. Experimentation should not, however, be limited to the development of new models. Perhaps we will find, as I tend to believe, that the two-room school is coming back.

GROUPING

Learners or learning?

ROBERT E. BILLS

HAVE WE EVER really shown concern for the individual learner or is he a thorn in our sides? Has not our concern been for learning rather than learners, teaching rather than teachers, administration rather than administrators, and achievement rather than achievers? I believe you will agree that these are bold questions and that they probably require some clarification.

What I am asking is this: Have we ever really been concerned with individual differences, and doesn't the question of grouping, whether homogeneous or heterogeneous, indicate that we have not yet concerned ourselves with the individuality of the learner?

Let me elaborate. The psychology of individual differences, as it is taught in most colleges, is usually a course in normative statistics. Such courses deal with averages and deviations from the averages. When we look at a pupil's score we describe him in terms of how much he deviates from the average of the group. Usually we compare a pupil's deviation with some measure of group variability to see how he stands in relation to his group. We ignore his own uniqueness and see his importance only in comparisons with a group. Although we try to ignore him, the individual remains as the basic unit in educational work, and one individual cannot be added to another without destroying the individuality of both.

Granted my statements are extreme, but so are our practices. We move more and more toward the group, toward such things as helping the individual accept his role in society, toward helping him learn the things which we believe he needs to know in order to function in society, and toward the use of measuring instruments that ignore his individuality and bind him to his past instead of freeing him for his becoming. We hear over and over that we must engage ourselves in mass education because of the mass of children facing us. Let me suggest that

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we may be asking the wrong question. Instead of asking, "How can we engage ourselves in mass education?" we should be asking, "How can we educate the many who present themselves at our doors?"

When we ask, "Should we use homogeneous or heterogeneous grouping?" we are probably trying to reach a better basis for individualizing instruction. I suggest, however, that none of these methods is anything more than an administrative device to cope with the large numbers of children we are supposed to teach and the task of taking these large numbers of children in the directions we believe they should go.

Most studies of grouping try to answer the question, "Will children learn more when they are grouped in a particular way?" And we seem to mean, "Will children learn more subject matter or skill or something else if we organize them in groups in a particular way?" Our concern, although fairly nonspecific and nonspecified, seems to remain with teaching children what we believe is important, and most people remain unconcerned with helping children develop in ways which children see as important or in helping them move in self-determined directions. We use such terms as "enhancing," "modifying," and "maximizing" capacity or potential, but what do these terms really mean to us? We use them when what we are trying to do is to help a person increase his ability to be intelligent in his behavior. This goal requires us to be concerned with a multitude of factors all operating at the same time. This is difficult to manage.

But it is also difficult for us to ignore this multitude of factors when we know they are important in human behavior and human welfare. As an afterthought many studies ask, "What happens to those other things such as attitudes, values, self-concepts, etc.?"

Few directors of studies have tried to devise learning situations in which they could try to change the multitude of variables important to human welfare, human well-being, and human behavior.

I see homogeneous groups, not as an effort to get beyond subject matter and skills, but as a device for ignoring human variability and for reducing our need to concern ourselves with individual pupils. Once children are homogeneously grouped, we assume that the differences are no longer matters of concern. Nor do I see heterogeneous grouping as a deliberate effort to do any more than to teach subject matter and skills. We often hear that homogeneous grouping has harmful effects on pupils' personality and that these can be avoided in heterogeneous grouping, and that youngsters of diverse talents can learn better from each other in heterogeneous groups, and so forth. But please note: What we are saying is that if we group heterogeneously we do not have to pay attention to these variables because they will take care of themselves.

WE HAVE not tried to change the multitude of variables because we have not really seen them as of primary importance in human behavior or as primary results of education. We say, "Oh, yes, these are nice results, but are they our primary goals?" "Is not our primary goal the teaching of the skills, techniques, and knowledge required for proficiency in reading, arithmetic, and for the other skills which our children will need?" Most of us would agree that elementary schools exist primarily to teach reading skills, etc., but I imagine many of us would also agree that reading, for example, is not just a matter of practice, skill, vocabulary, and technique, but a complex behavioral task which is an expression of the total person.

But it is not always easy to convince ourselves, parents, and other adults of this. It is easier to believe that our world is rational and knowable, that the extent to which we can deal rationally with the world and have knowledge about it, to this extent we can cope with it and can become successful.

I believe, however, that we live in an unknowable world which man can use in many ways and that man imposes himself on his world and seeks to know it by means of the framework he has constructed. In contrast, though, education often takes as its task the communication of agreements which seem necessary to cause other people to see the world as we now see it or have agreed it is.

But each of us lives his life in his own individual world which does not resemble the world of any other person. Each person has experience, and the raw data of his experience differ from those of any other person. Furthermore a person is "set" to interpret his experience according to his own world.

We need to make sense of our individual world. In it we must discover consistency, and if we cannot discover it, we must impose it on ourselves through stereotypes and generalizations. And here we begin to encounter difficulty. Since generalizations are abstractions from data, they can never truly represent the data and thus never exactly fit a situation. However, if we did not abstract and generalize to arrive at some form of consistency, we would be left in a buzzing confusion of facts and would constantly receive sensory data devoid of any meaning.

Consistency of perception is necessary to existence. Our interpretations of our past experience provide this consistency and serve as a screen through which we receive new experience. Thus present experience tends to be interpreted as identical with past experience. Interpretation is more or less structure bound by the past.

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One way of avoiding making our own generalizations is to attempt to adopt what we think are other people's generalizations. And one way of achieving security is to have other people accept our generalizations as meaningful to them. We see many teachers trying to have children accept their perceptions and children who are more than willing to accept the teacher's perceptions as the easy way out. We have children trying to avoid conflict by acting as if someone else's perceptions were their own, which, incidentally, may be the quickest way to develop a personality conflict.

But some children cannot accept someone else's perceptions; they must make sense of their own world. Such children often present discipline problems, leave school early, are underachievers, or appear to be poorly motivated. Too often, they are the best potential the world possesses.

TO ACCEPT another person's goal as suitable for our behavior means that we must deny our own experience and attempt to act as if the other person's experience were our own. Since we cannot experience as another does, we are left without experience on which to base our behavior. It is therefore not only difficult and at times impossible to change a person's behavior by force, manipulation, persuasion, or other means, but also usually harmful, for it causes him to deny his own experience and thus to have less experience on which to base his behavior.

If we desire to change human behavior by means of education, we must seek means other than force—either subtle or obvious. Suppose we approach the problem by asking, "What causes human behavior?"

Perceptual theory holds that what a person does is consistent with the structure of his perceptual field *at the instant of action;* that is, as a person sees, so he behaves. Man's basic drive is the need to maintain or to enhance his status. In other words, man's behavior is directed toward maintaining or enhancing his present status. When man has a choice of action he chooses to do that which offers him what he sees as the greatest possibility for raising his status. To put this more strongly, man *must* do what seems to him to be best for him at that instant.

The perceptual field of the healthy person is an ever-changing pattern, and it is doubtful that the structure at any one instant will ever again be repeated in its entirety. Thus what our perceptions and behavior are at any one instant will not be repeated exactly at any other.

To change behavior through education we must know what determines the structure of the perceptual field and why it is that the behavior of some people tends toward rigid consistency.

The key to the structure of the perceptual field is experience. And the key to intelligent behavior is a broad background of experience readily available to the behaver, without distortion or denial. Experience can be divided into a number of areas of belief. I cannot go into these areas here except to say that they may be divided into beliefs about facts, faith, superstition, values, attitudes, self-concepts, and others. The main point is that a person interprets his experience, and these interpretations are his beliefs. Although his beliefs may bear little resemblance to the beliefs of another person, they determine the structure of his perceptual field.

Once the field is structured, the structure itself begins to determine future structure. Since no one type of belief has primacy in determining behavior, behavior cannot be significantly altered by changing only one type of belief. This raises a serious question about the almost exclusive emphasis some teachers and some schools place on subject matter. It is obvious that *significant changes in behavior cannot be accomplished by subject matter alone. Intelligent behavior is dependent on the breadth of experience which is available to a person without distortion or denial at the instant of his action and on his ability to be open to new experience so that he can modify his past behavior.*

A variety of factors can cause experience not to be available or not to be available without distortion or denial. Several have particular relevance to teaching. An incomplete or damaged organism and an impaired or inadequately developed central nervous system cannot receive the experience necessary for intelligent behavior. Physiological malfunctioning resulting from disease, malnutrition, toxic poisons, and the like can also prevent the complete and undistorted reception of experience. Some of these can be treated in school, others outside the school. But here we are concerned with factors amenable to control in the classroom.

The primary factor in denial and distortion of experience is called threat. Attempts to force a person to change his perceptions usually cause him to deny and to distort his experience. If he acquires experience in ways that mean little to him, he will find little personal meaning in it and consequently ignore it. To force him to accept experience as meaningful when it is not is threatening and thus distorting.

When threatened, a person begins to defend and protect himself. He begins to deny or distort his experience, to make it what he wants it to be or thinks it should be. The greater the threat, the more he is closed to the meaning his experience had for his organism at the time he had it. The most important factor in determining a person's openness to experience is a threat.

(*Continued on p. 22*)

GROUPING

(*Continued from p. 12*)

GIVEN this information about behavior and behavior change, we can say that the task of education is to provide a person with opportunity to acquire a breadth of experience that will be personally meaningful and readily available to him when he needs it. In addition, education must enable a person to remain open to experience and to seek new experience, and thus continue to learn to behave more intelligently.

Obviously this goal cannot be attained through teaching which emphasizes only a textbook approach to mastery of subject matter. Few teachers would disagree with this, but it seems necessary to say it here in the light of the criticism being leveled at education and the reaction of many educators to the criticism. Such criticism has led to what are called strengthened curricular requirements, to requirements of mastery in a great number of subject fields, and to greater concentration on formal subject matter in the elementary school. But can we effectively educate boys and girls through these emphases alone, even though we group them homogeneously, heterogeneously, or for individualized instruction? How we organize will be of little consequence as long as our goals and emphases remain unchanged.

JULIA W. GORDON

Grouping and human values

IF WE TRULY VALUE the fullest development of each individual, then our study of grouping should be in terms of human values. The way we put children together in groups reveals how we regard human beings. Do we believe that human welfare and the welfare of our democratic society are best served by developing to the maximum the potential within each individual? Or do we believe that individuals are expendable?

Our direction must be clear. Dr. Melvin Tumin, anthropologist at Princeton University, has said that essentially the purpose of the tribal reunion was to rededicate its members to the highest ideals of the tribe, to consider "What is it we *would* do if we could?" This is the question to keep before us; then when we make compromises we will recognize them for what they are—expedients—and we can return to our proper direction as soon as possible.

Each time we ask "What is it we would do if we could?" we have a fresh opportunity to reexamine our assumptions, our basic values. Moreover, we can include new knowledge and new experience. A great deal of knowledge of human potentiality, for example, is available today that is not widely known or used. Margaret Mead has said that we continue to measure human beings by what they are and what they have been, not by what they can become. How should we work with each child if the way is to be left open to him to become all that he could become? This is an interesting question. And we do have some know-how that bears directly on the question of grouping children for learning.

Before examining the factors in grouping children for learning that will help each child realize the best in himself, let us see why this should be the aim of any grouping and what we know about human potentiality to guide us.

Human values

Why should we rank human values highest? We live in a democracy, an organization committed to the ideal of individual human worth. If our practice could come closer to the ideal, it would be our greatest strength. Yet we fall far short in our concern for individual human beings. This is reflected in the mounting toll of maladjustment in our society. In 1946 Arthur Jersild (in *Child Development and the Curriculum*, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York) said, "If present trends continue, a large proportion of pupils in the average first grade will be in the ranks of the maladjusted at one time or another during their life span." In May 1960 I made a search to bring Dr. Jersild's 1946 figures up to date. This is the way they compare.

The estimates are that at some time in their lives, out of 100 first-grade children in—

1946	*1960*	
1 or 2	1 or 2	would commit major crimes and spend part of their lives in jail,
8 to 10	10 to 12	would develop serious mental illness and spend part of their lives in mental hospitals,
3 to 4	4 to 5	would be so retarded that they would have great difficulty in becoming self-supporting,
30 to 50	36 to 60	would have maladjustments taking such forms as petty crime, vocational failure, chronic unemployment, emotional instability, marital unhappiness or divorce, other forms of failure to make a satisfactory go of things.
42 to 66	51 to 79	totals

In an average first-grade class of 30 children, the prediction in 1946 was that 13 to 20 of them would be in the ranks of the maladjusted at some time in their lives; in 1960 it was 15 to 24 children. This represents an increase of 20 percent in 14 years.

It seems that our basic task must be to create those conditions and to provide opportunity for those experiences and relationships that will insure the sound mental and emotional development of each individual. To do this we need some understanding of human processes.

Human processes

What human processes do we need to understand? To understand a human being we have to go to research even in physics and chemistry—to the sciences that deal with matter as well as with living things. We see something like this.

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1. *The human being as an energy system.*—Quantum physics has made possible the view that all phenomena, from galaxy formation to human intelligence, form a single unitary process from simplicity to complexity and ever-increasing consciousness.

The same processes are condensed in the brain—the most densely organized unit of matter in our known universe. The cortex contains 10 billion cells and is capable of 10^{278} synapses. The speed of energy exchange in thought processes is incredible, and flashes of insight can occur in which long, cumulative past experience is evaluated at the unconscious level and the answer comes out right, and we know it is right. Moreover the immense number of possible synaptic combinations makes it inevitable that free creative thought should result.

We cannot know what increasing consciousness and creativity will result from the increasingly complex organizing of energy in man's brain. But we do know that man already has the potentiality for creating any kind of world he wishes.

2. *Perception and learning.*—A human being learns about his world through his sensory equipment. The brain organizes what he takes in into perceptions. The quality of the perceptions, whether or not what the individual perceives is actually so, depends upon the quality of his experiences. For example, if the organism actually lives through the experience, the information is built in and is more readily available later than information that comes vicariously. A simple illustration is Maslow's story of the two boys with Tinker Toy sets. One boy's father shows him what he can construct with it. The other boy works it out for himself. The first boy will arrive at an acceptable product sooner than the second, but the second will have built into himself invaluable bits of information that he can draw upon at will with understanding. The more a person's experience is of the latter kind, the more he can build in accurate information to use in dealing with new events more perceptively.

Because human beings have language, their learning can be hastened considerably. Not everything one learns has to be experienced directly. And herein is the problem. An adult with wide direct experience can learn accurately a vast number of things through being told or through reading. But what *children* can learn accurately in this way is much more limited. Yet, our society tends to shortcut the direct experience and to place increasing emphasis on vicarious modes of learning. The product may seem superior earlier, like the first boy with the Tinker set. But children by this means lose opportunities to accumulate information in which they can have full confidence.

Another thing happens if they do not have inner resources to draw upon: children come to mistrust themselves and their own experience. They have to look to others, to measures outside themselves, in order to evaluate themselves. The difficulty adults in our society have in giving up grades and marks attests to their necessity for this measurement of themselves and their children. How else can they know how good they are? Unfortunately, the more a child mistrusts his own experience, the less he will try new experience. He will have to wait to be told or to be guided. If he can trust his experience he will be eager to try out his accumulating powers. He takes an active, interested part in his own growth and development.

It seems to me that we should ask about the growing child: "What must he experience daily now so that what is built into him is accurate and sufficiently detailed to contribute to increasingly complex understanding later and to his confidence in his developing capacities?" and "When can he be helped to make a leap in learning without sacrificing the good of direct experience?"

3. *Emotions.*—A human being learns about his world in still another fashion, through feeling. In each experience he not only perceives the "facts" but also has feelings about them. His store of feelings accumulates as his store of knowledge accumulates. The accumulation of this qualitative experience influences what else he can allow himself to take in of his world, and what choices will be open to him in regard to future experience. It will allow him to perceive fully and to behave appropriately in the situation, or it will cause him to distort or select from his experience that which is protective of him.

Human beings can move in the direction of growth and fulfillment, or withdraw into safety. Growth and change involve risk. The more a person moves in the direction of growth, the less assuredly safe he will be. How great a risk he can take depends upon his view of the support of the people who are a part of his life and upon the strength of his values. If he is surrounded by people who can let him do his own experiencing to an appreciable degree as he is growing up, he can more readily move in the direction of growth. If, however, he is denied the support of those closest to him, or if all his experiences are rigidly directed, his safety needs most often will take precedence.

Yet, a person can withstand an inordinate amount of punishment from those around him if he is pursuing goals that have deep meaning for him, and if he feels he is moving toward fulfillment.

It seems to me that we should ask: "What must a child experience now so that he will be willing to take the risks involved in extending his capacities, in growing?" and "How much safety does he need to have in order to be able to take the risks?"

4. *Socialization.*—A human being learns about his personal relationship to the world through other human beings. A child cannot escape viewing the world and himself through the eyes of those who surround him. The process of acculturation is demanding, and yet it seems natural to the child. He experiences directly the life of the people who are closest to him. This is what becomes a part of him. For a time this is all the reality he knows. Thus patterns of culture are transmitted to succeeding generations. When differences come to be noticed, it is this early direct experience that seems "right," and what is different, "wrong." For many people this is the way it remains throughout their lives. Even for those whose experiences reach far beyond those of the childhood culture, it is the way of behaving they learned early in life that persists in being the comfortable one.

The possibility of fulfillment of any human being depends upon the quality of the people about him. For example, a child born into a home where the language is spoken well, speaks well naturally and easily; he knows no other way. But such is the circumstance of another child that he may spend half a lifetime in learning to use the language as well as the first child may use it at age 5. And in the conscious effort of maintaining this hard-earned means of communication, he may expend a tremendous amount of energy daily. In the meantime the first child has the opportunity, through his command of the language and his free energy, to realize more of human potentiality than the second child has opportunity to do. He may not make the best of it, but he has a long head start.

The accident of birth does not make the first child "better" or more worthy than the second. Both have a right to the opportunities for fulfillment of the best in themselves. But the second may be denied the opportunities if the standard of measurement at any point is the end product rather than effort and growth.

Questions we should ask, it seems to me, are: "What kind of experience with people must a child have daily so that he can have a realistic and healthy view of himself as a person in process?" and "What should be the quality of the experience so that the things that come to feel natural and 'right' to him are those ways of behaving that lead to his optimum fulfillment and contribution to the world?"

Factors in grouping

What are the factors in the grouping of children for desirable and effective learning? In the light of what has been said here about the nature of human beings, it is inevitable that the way people are grouped for any purpose has a deep effect on their development. The effect of grouping on children reveals what we truly value for children regardless of what we say we value.

In our democracy we have designed a system of education intended to reach every human being with opportunity to become all he can become. We are now reviewing that system in order to make changes in it. For what? If we believe in a democratic society, then there is only one answer: to bring our system of education closer to its stated ideals. The factors in grouping, then, must be in human terms and in individual terms.

1. *Grouping should be flexible.*—Since human beings are in the process of becoming more than they are, and since life processes are dynamic, school organizations should be "open" so that change can be incorporated at the moment it is needed. The structure should be so flexible that at any time we can change our ways of working with children in order to incorporate new knowledge (*a*) of the way human beings learn and develop, (*b*) of the world, and (*c*) of the educational processes that help us match necessary subject matter to the child's readiness to take it in.

The greatest enemy of change is categorization. Once we have categorized and classified, this becomes *it:* we have *the* answer and need seek no further. In our schools this may take the form of rigid courses of study used year after year in the same way or administratively expedient grouping of children, even though many children cannot find their proper place in the group. Dr. Geoffrey Esty, the medical consultant with the New Jersey State Department of Education, has an apt phrase for all this; he says the schools are suffering from the "hardening of the categories."

This is not to say that structure is bad or unnecessary. Structure gives meaning and wholeness to a collection of items or ideas. But it can only include what we have at the moment and should therefore remain temporary and open to include what becomes known.

2. *Grouping should be in terms of the purposes of the individual child.*—Whatever experience a child has as he grows must be meaningful to him as he explores it. If it is, he is more apt to trust it, to study it, to build the meaning into himself, and to become increasingly more self-reliant and mature. The more we try to do things *for* children, make their decisions for them, and prescribe what they should learn, the more we increase their need for safety, and the result is the opposite of what we really want to happen. The child finds it easier to do what is required of him than to take risks in discovering truths for himself.

It must not be forgotten that the *individual* child is the important unit. Grouping him with others is merely one means of creating an environment favorable to his growth.

3. *The basic group with which the child spends most of*

his day should be as heterogeneous as possible.—Just as the individual's early experience in his family comes to be what seems natural and right, so also does the school experience come to be what is right and proper schooling. It is important, then, that the school experience embody as nearly as possible the values inherent in the democratic ideal.

When every individual can vote, each individual with one vote has tremendous decisionmaking powers. Only he can make good decisions for all who understand the needs and aspirations of all, to whom the needs and aspirations of others unlike himself are as worthy of consideration as his own. This can only be achieved if he can be close enough to a wide sampling of different human beings to see their behavior as natural and understandable.

Inevitably, when people alike group themselves and do not know what is going on in the other groups, they tend to be distrustful and suspicious of the others, to raise protective fences and close themselves in ever more tightly. There is, it seems to me, no place in the public schools of a democracy for anything that separates us.

If children are to build on the facts that make it possible for them to perceive accurately what people are really like, they need to grow up with as wide a variety of other children as possible. Every effort should be made to supply opportunities for this experience in the daily living of the basic classroom unit. Since growing children are different at various age levels, I believe a child gains self-understanding as well as understanding of others if his class represents a variety of ages.

To deprive children of this basic experience with all kinds of human beings is to deprive them, perhaps for their lifetimes, of the human understanding it teaches. If they are to learn this later, they will have to do it consciously and with a great expenditure of energy. In our present age we can ill afford to leave human understanding only to those who will make the effort to understand. Such an elite won't save us.

4. *The number of children in the basic classroom group should be small enough for face-to-face encounters.*—In a group small enough for children to move freely in, choices are made. Children size each other up and choose each other for a variety of purposes. Working and playing together, in close contact with others, each child must suffer the consequences of his acts. Since other children react to him directly, he can perceive what his acts mean to others. He can explain if he feels he has been misunderstood, or he can change if he feels he has been mistaken.

In addition, in a small enough group other people's actions are so close to him that he must take them into account. When a child has many experiences of this kind with a wide sampling of people, he has more facts available to him, and therefore can perceive situations more wholly and accurately, and thus behave more effectively. The accuracy and keenness of his perceptions open up new possibilities for behavior at a new high level. More choices are available to him; he is less bound by rigid cultural patterns.

5. *Essentially the same group of children should remain together for a long enough time to develop a stake in each other's welfare and growth.*—In small groups, where face-to-face encounters are inevitable, children readily see the consequences of their acts. This tends to make them more responsible for their behavior. When a group of children begin to feel responsible for their behavior, they can learn to develop, through time, a good society for themselves. Such values as understanding of self, compassion for others, a feeling of oneness with others can emerge. Time and closeness to others are indispensable factors in understanding.

6. *Each child should have time alone to strengthen his trust in himself.*—While a child cannot have a realistic view of himself or a sense of responsibility apart from others, the ultimate responsibility for his behavior rests with him alone. He needs time alone, after taking in the world, to contemplate what he has, to give it meaning. He needs time alone to work at stretching his own powers, to pursue his own goals. He needs to work at what is important to him even if no one else wishes to work with him. Dr. René Dubos, biologist at the Rockefeller Institute, has said, "Anything that forces a man to function against his goals becomes the cause of the bodily or mental disease. Man can overcome even the most painful limitations and handicaps to the extent that he is functioning in a manner that corresponds to fulfillment."

It may well be that the statistics on the increasing rate of human maladjustment reflect the fact that we do not allow growing human beings to learn to define their own goals and to work toward what seems important to them.

A human being must maintain his aloneness. His best interests, as well as the best interests of society, are served if the integrity and honesty of each individual are preserved. It is the individual who must make the choice or decision in the light of the best experience he can have. The seeds of human destruction are sown when he turns this responsibility over to another or to something called "the group." The group can only supply him with necessary facts for more accurate perception of the total situation. If he can remain "open" to what he perceives, he can make wiser decisions.

7. *Each child should have opportunity to share what he has with his peers and be challenged by them.*—As a human being discovers his potential and as he is able, through experience, to open up new potential, he has to

communicate his discovery to someone. Nothing encourages a person more than to find someone who completely understands what he is talking about because he, too, has been through a similar experience. The child who plays the French horn well, or the child who can throw and catch a swift ball, is joyful when he can perform with others whose performance is at the highest possible level. This is a powerful uniting factor.

Under such conditions, the performers can enter into friendly competition with each other to match or exceed each other in competence. They compare notes on what they are practicing, how well they are doing. They give "trade secrets" to each other, revealing how they discovered a better way. To do well and to keep improving become important personal values. And because the enterprise binds them together and the achievement of one makes possible further growth for all, they come to accept the value of helping each other become more competent.

Children can perceive these things most keenly if they leave a widely heterogeneous group for a while each week to work with their true peers toward goals they consider important. As a result, each child learns to recognize the extent of his own ability. When he is back again in the heterogeneous group, he has the opportunity to perceive his true position of relative competence.

If children are kept with their peers in ability all the time, they cannot get the perspective they need for a true assessment of themselves. Consequently, relationship with their equals in ability can become a threatening thing. Competition to maintain status in the eyes of the adults controlling the situation becomes a divisive force rather than a uniting one among such children. It is true that many persons can achieve a high degree of intellectual competence by this kind of pressure. But all that is known about the nature of human beings suggests that if children could be helped to perceive themselves and their world realistically, we would have all the intellectual competence we need, and, in addition, wisdom and lovingkindness as well.

8. *The position of adults concerned with grouping should be such that the other aspects of grouping may be advanced.*—In view of what has been said about culturation, perhaps the best start toward fulfillment of his potential that we can give each child is to put closest to him in his daily living adults who embody human values. The teacher closest to the child would see him as a person in his own right, preserve his integrity, and allow him to grow in his unique way, eventually to make his unique responsible contribution. This teacher is the one who makes sure that the child is developing an integrated, whole, and healthy personality. Then other teachers can come into his life for other purposes.

The evidence from many sciences indicates that the human values we have been talking about here cannot be transmitted in large, impersonal groupings. Yet the suggestion is being made that we put the "best" teacher, the master teacher, in just such a situation, and the less-than-master teacher closest to the child. My guess is that insufficient thought has been given to the learning processes of children.

Let me give just two reasons of many why children learn little when they are taught in a large audience situation. The first is that many children who have defects in visual or auditory acuity, coordination, perception, problem-solving ability, and certain aspects of behavior do not learn much when they are in a large audience situation. What has been taught there has to be retaught later in a small group. The second reason is that the children who are least disposed to change are the ones least likely to allow themselves to learn anything from it.

Face to face with each child in a small group, a teacher can get feedback from the child and perceive his reaction, and she is in a better position to be helpful to the child. Teaching in a large audience situation, if the goals of education include the healthy, unique, responsible development of each child, is at best a waste of time and, at worst, seriously damaging to the child's concept of what constitutes learning.

One other aspect of the position of adults in the grouping of children needs to be considered here. It is true that no one teacher can be all things to all children. The classroom teacher may find it necessary to call upon other teachers for help, both for herself and for individual children or groups of children. She may call on other classroom teachers, or psychologists and other specialists in human development, or subject-matter specialists.

A small group of teachers may plan together, helping each other learn what is needed, and pooling their special competencies. Occasionally each teacher will work with individuals or small groups of pupils in other teachers' classrooms, whenever the human purposes are best served by doing so.

The chief value of the subject-matter specialist is not that he knows more subject matter to "pass on" to children but that he has a larger perspective in one area. He can hear and understand and use what a child is saying to him in helping the child take the next step. When a child begins to synthesize an accumulation of knowledge, the specialist can help him to be conscious of the processes he is using. He can help him to be aware of the discipline of the subject.

Children are at different levels in the various subjects, and they progress at different rates, erratically. It is hard

to see how a subject-matter specialist can work with a large group or an entire class very often, any more than the classroom teacher can. His most effective use is with single individuals and with small groups, and with the classroom teacher, particularly by broadening the classroom teacher's perspective.

If the classroom teacher is to help each child integrate his experiences, he must know in some depth what these experiences are. The classroom teacher can learn about these experiences by being present when the children are with another teacher, and by frequent conferences with others who also work with the children.

And so, if we truly value the fullest development of each individual, our ways of working with children must be in terms of human values. We must do what we can to help each child realize the best in himself.

Grouping of Children

Its meaning for the preservice education of teachers

CHARLES M. LONG

GROUPING CHILDREN for instructional purposes continues to draw the attention of nearly everyone in our society who may have any interest at all in educating the young. Perhaps no other aspect of schooling has been and continues to be so heavily researched. This continuing interest is all the more amazing in the face of the results of the research. Grouping *per se* does not seem to have much impact on achievement. That it does not was reasonably well established early in this century, and none of the many carefully conducted studies that have been done since then have come out with significantly different conclusions. The discernible difference in the results obtained under the various grouping plans is negligible. Children seem to learn to read, for example, about as well when they are grouped in one way as in another. The enthusiasm which a new plan engenders may seem to produce better results for a while, but most of the plans do not wear or transplant well. Witness the blossoming and fading of the platoon plan.

The periodic concern about how well a subject is being taught—reading for example—always brings forth a spate of "new" plans for grouping and teaching children. And when these plans do not show the results hoped for, the search for a panacea to solve achievement problems becomes more frenzied. Children are jerked out of one situation and regrouped into another with little or no serious concern about the possible side effects of such changes on the lives of boys and girls or about what is known about how children learn best.

But the essential question remains: Why is the evidence on grouping so inconclusive? Could it be that more fundamental considerations have been ignored?

The research program at the Bank Street College of Education over a period of some 30 years tentatively confirmed certain psychodynamic theories of personality development and the learning process which have meaning for the role and education of the teacher, for the curriculum, and, by implication, not only for the grouping of children for instructional purposes but for teacher education. These are the basic propositions: [1]

1. *Education and mental health can be mutually reinforcing.* Insofar as education enables the pupil to clarify his ideas and to acquire competence and well-forged tools for meeting new perplexities and challenges, it strengthens him in his wish and his responsibility to live effectively and knowingly in his world. This strength the pupil not only *has* but *feels;* and this feeling, permeating all his relations in life, is easily recognizable as an ingredient of mental health.
2. *In every learning situation a pupil experiences simultaneously a dual process.* A pupil learning specific subject matter and skills in the classroom is adding to his store of competence; but he is also being influenced by the pervasive qualitative aspects of the situation, and these may affect his feeling about himself, his images of authority, his ideas of safety and adventure. These reactions inevitably affect each other.
3. *The principles of mental health should be applied to the teaching process.* Principles of psychodynamics should be applied to the ways in which knowledge is transmitted as well as to the protection of individuality. We should recognize the need for psychological consistency in our concepts about formal and informal education—a dichotomy which we sometimes make erroneously.
4. *There is a major potential for positive growth in the interaction between different spheres of experience.* Educators need to arrange the content, procedures, and settings of schooling so that the best use may be made of pupils' interactions.

I propose that in our practices of grouping children we realize fully the significance of these dynamic processes which are present in every learning situation. The common practice of attempting to group children homogeneously on the basis of a single characteristic or group of characteristics such as intelligence, reading achievement, and academic achievement is, in general, questionable in that it shifts the emphasis from the dynamic elements to the noncritical elements in the learning process.

In current grouping practices several rather obvious issues such as the child's self-image and his feelings about being shifted about in a pawn-like fashion are overlooked. Just possibly almost any reasonable plan for

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[1] *Basic Approaches to Mental Health: Teacher Education at Bank Street College,* by Barbara Biber, Elizabeth Gilkeson, and Charlotte Winsor, Bank Street College of Education Publications, New York.

grouping children for instruction would result in greater achievement if these basic conditions were more carefully and sensitively managed. Generally speaking, in grouping children we have given too little respect to the experience of the race. Men have been grouping themselves in families, clans, and communities, to mention a few of the ways, for a long, long time, and seldom, if ever, have they grouped themselves by age, for example.

A more consistent approach to grouping would be to develop patterns which would enable the teacher to perform certain key roles, for example,

to know the children and establish rapport with them;

to support their positive feelings about themselves;

to guide their learning so as to develop their egos; and

to develop a system of functional controls.

Grouping for effective learning in these terms would need to be flexible and dynamic. The time children spend with teachers and the size of group are critical considerations.

Still another important question remains to be asked. Do beliefs about people and the corresponding convictions of the society make any difference in determining desirable bases for grouping children? This question becomes particularly significant if we believe that the process of grouping is educative in itself. And we have reason to believe that children learn as much from how we work with them as from direct teaching in the classroom.

What are the implications of (1) protecting and enhancing the strength of child's self-image, (2) respecting the child as an individual, (3) considering man's experience in grouping, and (4) considering the democratic values and convictions of our society?

Children should be grouped and taught in an environment conducive to success. While failure is unquestionably a reality in everyone's life, no one should seriously question the undesirability of labeling or branding a child as a failure. The child should be encouraged to find security in a group where he can be successful most of the time. Only then can he be helped to manage failure in a creative and positive manner.

The relative immaturity of children is often used as a reason for shifting them about from one group to another or from one teacher to another. Imagine how adults would react to similar treatment! Children should at least be given the opportunity to have a voice in these decisions, or—and this is more important—to have an opportunity to find their way in a new and strange situation. This business of shifting a child from one group or class to another on the basis of a "test" is certainly open to question in this regard. Yet this procedure is common practice in many schools.

5. *If a pupil's emotional processes are to become active elements of his learning experience, education must take responsibility for providing for integrating mechanisms and relationships.* Integration can be expected to take place only to the extent that it is possible for the pupil to identify himself in the situation and adapt himself to it, and to become aware of and discover himself. Such dynamic processes can be mediated partly through the structure and quality of the educational milieu, but more significantly through teachers, who can enact balanced roles of support, control, and stimulation.

Some maintain that grouping children according to chronological age is open to question. Grouping according to age is not compatible with the ways in which people outside of school group themselves. A family consisting of persons of the same age would be a biological absurdity! It would appear to be high time for educators to reexamine our grading system, even though family and school are not analogous in a literal sense. The continuous-progress idea is a step in the right direction, although the reasons used may be open to question. Such a plan does provide a better possibility of adjusting content to individual needs, but more importantly it provides a more natural grouping—one in which children have an opportunity to learn from one another in a situation which has more of the dynamic possibilities of the family.

Finally, should not the ways in which children are grouped for instructional purposes be compatible with the basic convictions of our society? We are living in a democracy. Inherent in this political conviction is the basic notion that individuals—our children—should have the maximum opportunity to learn how to live as citizens in a democracy. And they can hardly learn in the school if it does not provide an environment in which they can learn by practice. This would imply further that children should not be moved about administratively within the school without involving them in the decision to move them. Their understanding and consent may be difficult to secure, but it is difficult with adults as well.

This discussion, with its reference to elementary education, is more applicable to teacher education than you might at first think. The elementary school graduate is almost as far away chronologically from the kindergartner as he is from the teacher trainee. And in terms of experience and maturity he is far closer to the latter.

In fact, these same dynamic processes apply at all levels of education, and are crucially important for teacher education, since teachers will need to be conscious of them and to put them into practice. As suggested in *Basic Approaches to Mental Health*, "Such processes can be mediated partially through the structure and quality of the educational milieu, but more significantly through teacher figures who can enact balanced roles of support, control, and stimulation." The content of teacher education programs should therefore be selected to develop teachers' capabilities to en-

act these roles. The Bank Street College program provides a structure which allows students to identify—and develop their ability to enact—these teacher roles. This is particularly apparent in the guidance field. Here, for example, not more than five students are assigned to an individual faculty member in teacher education who devotes 2 full days a week to these students.

Since in teacher education as well as elementary education time is required to study the individual student, advisers use their knowledge and understanding of each student to help him understand himself as he tries to enact the teaching role. A teacher whose preparation has made him sensitive to the demands of these critical roles will resist grouping devices which inhibit him in his enactment of these roles.

In summary, research evidence indicates that grouping in itself has little relationship to the quality and extent of learning. More critical factors are the quality of the teacher-child relationship, the child's self image, and the potential for success in whatever structure the teacher provides. In any grouping plan cognizance needs to be taken of the basis underlying man's natural groupings, such as the family. Grouping practices need to be consistent with the political ideology in the society for which children are being educated. An effective program of preservice education of teachers fosters understanding of this kind.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—*Dr. Long's article ends the* School Life *series adapted from papers read at the Office conference on grouping. We are sure, however, that other papers read at the conference would be equally interesting to many of our readers. The others will be reported in* Education Briefs: *"Is the Focus on Program or People as Individuals?" by John D. Greene, director of instruction, East Baton Rouge Parish, La.; "Grouping Children in the Small Rural School," by Ralph G. Bohrson, coordinator, the Western States Small Schools Project, Colorado State Department of Education; "What We Have Learned About Grouping," by Pat Wear, chairman, Department of Education, Berea College, Kentucky; and "Comments about Preliminary Report on Grouping," by Minnie Lee Rowland, consultant in elementary education, Florida State Department of Education.*

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1984 O—721-636